VOL. 131 No. 3 • THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2025 North Texas Daily @NTDaily @NTDaily NTDAILY.COM

North Texas Daily

Serving the University of North Texas & Denton since 1916

News

Denton smoke shops clears shelves in response to Senate Bill 2024

By Jordan Guilliams
Staff Writer

Denton smoke shops have cleared their inventory of disposable and cannabinoid vapes following the implementation of Senate Bill 2024 on Sept. 1.

The bill, signed into law on June 20, bans the selling of most e-cigarette products or "disposable vapes" statewide. This includes the sale of vapes with colorful packaging that could be marketed towards kids as well as vapes manufactured in China. The law also prohibits THC vapes, CBD vapes that contain cannabinoids and flavored essential oil vape products.

Smoke shops were given two months to comply and clear these products from their inventory.

"So many small businesses in Texas have boomed with the legal cannabis [...] and it's unfortunate that a lot of places that operate really responsibly are going to take a hit," said Emily Barron, manager of local smoke shop The Zebra's Head and university alumna.

Barron said she believes the reason the Texas legislature has signed SB 2024 into law is to push more Texas residents to go through the Texas Compassionate Use Program.

Established in 2015, TCUP allows Texans with qualifying medical conditions to obtain low-THC cannabis products for medicinal use at state-licensed dispensaries.

"I think you have to be terminally ill, dealing with something very serious in order to qualify for TCUP, and the options are really limited," Barron said. "Typically low cannabis content and more expensive."

Employee Zack Butler helps check out customer Fashaa Edwards at The Zebra's Head on Sept. 9, 2025. **Photo by Aiden Gonzalez**

To qualify for TCUP, applicants must have at least one of 13 conditions, and dispensaries must be licensed to sell to them, which Barron said "gives money to the state."

The Zebra's Head has been a local dispensary for residents since 1994. While the shop has been able to give raises and employee bonuses in the past few years, Barron said she worries that more expansive bans may reverse the positive changes that have helped employees.

"Some of those nice changes that have happened where we've been able to take care of our employees a little bit more might not be as fruitful in the years to come [...]" Barron said.

In 2022, Denton residents voted to pass Proposition B to decriminalize marijuana in small doses. However, the Denton City Council voted in May 2025 to repeal the measure, citing conflicts with state law, and police never adopted it into enforcement practices.

Barron said she thinks, due to the ban, there could be a rise in off-the-street vapes. The Food and Drug Administration has warned against these "black market vapes," saying off-the-street e-cigarette use functions that could appeal to youth, mask the dangers of nicotine.

23-year-old Charlie McDaniel has been an employee at Stinky's Smoke Shop since 2022, where rows of empty shelves sit where disposable vapes used to be. McDaniel said they have had to turn away customers since the ban was put into effect earlier this month.

SMOKE continues on page 2

Sports

Sophomore wide receiver becomes impact player for North Texas

By Haylie Stum
Senior Sports Writer

When looking at North Texas football's roster, sophomore wide receiver Miles Coleman sticks out. He returns as the most productive pass catcher from last season after the exit of the Mean Green's top three receivers.

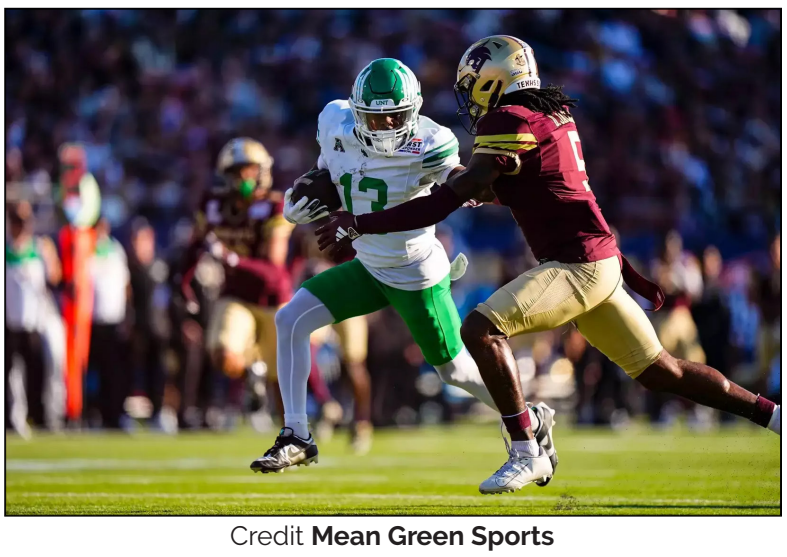
Although Coleman only started two games in the 2024-25 season, he caught for 378 yards and averaged over 10 yards per completion. Coleman's name does not jump off the page just for his play, however. The Austin, Texas native stands at 5 feet and 6 inches.

"I feel like I've been overlooked my whole life, but it just creates the kind of dog in me," Coleman said. "I know people are going to say whatever they want about me because of my height, but I just go out there and play my ball and do what I need to do to play my best."

North Texas has not rostered a wide receiver of his height since 2017 redshirt freshman Kerry Hall. The next receiver at Coleman's height or shorter was 2010 freshman Jared Harrison, standing at 5 feet and 5 inches.

After that, no listed player in the position meets the criteria as far back as online records reach.

Coleman is no stranger to playing at a size disadvantage. He played for the Vandegrift Vipers, a reputable Texas high school football program, before North Texas. He acquired over 3,000 receiving yards and 40 touchdowns in his final three seasons at Vandegrift High School. He also earned



Credit **Mean Green Sports**

District 25-6A MVP, Second Team All-State and Central Texas Player of the Year in his time as a Viper.

Despite being a dominant receiver in Texas 6A football, Coleman did not receive much high school recruiting attention due to his height. Heading into his senior year, he attended a Mean Green prospect camp. It took Coleman two one-on-one matchups to catch the eye of head coach Eric Morris, who then extended an offer on the spot.

Coleman said Morris will "find you if you can play," allowing the play on the gridiron to speak over anything else. For Coleman, rising to the occasion comes naturally.

"There's going to be people that are three times your size, and you're gonna have to block them on the perimeter or beat them in the open field," Coleman said. "I just think you have to have that grit of wanting to go out there and be the best player you can be."

Growth under the Mean Green

The coaching staff invited Coleman back to Denton following prospect camp for an unofficial visit. He had other mid-major offers, but it was there when Coleman knew North Texas was the place for him.

SOPHOMORE continues on page 6

What's Inside:

News pg.3
Texas Woman's University opens first Welcome Center in newly renovated Brackenridge Hall.

The Dose pg.5
British post-punk band Shame trades 'quiet life' for something greater on newest album.

Arts & Life

ELM Fork Chapter Master Naturalist Renee Province tables during the 30 Days of Pollinators celebration at Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center on Sept. 6, 2025. **Photo by Dilip Devanda**

Denton celebrates 30 Days of Pollinators event

By Sophia Carbajal
Senior Arts & Life Writer

Northern cardinals, eastern bluebirds and mourning doves flew over the heads of wildlife enthusiasts as they trekked along the still-wet trails of Ray Roberts Lake State Park for their morning bird walk.

Despite a later start than initially planned due to rainy weather, the bird walk kicked off three days of events as a part of 30 Days of Pollinators. Denton Parks and Recreation created the event to celebrate the city's participation in a month-long challenge to document native plants and pollinators.

On Sept. 6, the community was encouraged to learn about Denton's wildlife by going on a morning bird walk, attending an Eco-Fair at the Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center and observing moths with blacklights at night.

"Many people don't know that birds are pollinators just like bees, butterflies and other insects," said Reese Swaim, a university ecology major and UNT Bird Campus social media officer. "Similar to having native bees, native birds help pollinate our plants and maintain a healthy and balanced ecosystem."

The bird walk began around 8 a.m. and was led by the UNT Bird Campus Committee, a group that focuses on educating people about the role birds play in the environment. Swaim said the bird walk offered people the chance to learn about local pollinators who play a vital role in nature.

Denton's 30 Days of Pollinators is part of a national initiative called Parks for Pollinators BioBlitz, where people across the United States are documenting as many insects, birds and plants as they can by using an app called iNaturalist. As of Sept. 8, Denton community members have uploaded over a thousand observations, putting the city in first place for the most observations so far.

POLLINATORS continues on page 4

North Texas Daily

Editorial Team

Editor-in-Chief
Gianna Ortner-Findlay
@giannae.ortner_reports

Managing Editor
Hannah Everett
@hannah.g.everett

Design Editor
Mekielle Vaughn
@notso_meek

Digital Editor
Aiden Gonzalez
@_xiden

News Editor
Shehzil Imran
@Shehzildoesjournalism

Deputy News Editor
Diego Hernandez
@diego_jh8

Arts & Life/The Dose Editor
Matthew Winter
@matthewwinter_journalism

Opinion Editor
Alejandra Osegueda

Video Editor
Cooper Collins
@cooper_videos

Photo Editor
Ismael Beltran
@izzyf1icks

Illustrations Editor
Victoria Maldonado

Sports Editor
Justin Na

Production Team

Page Designer
Janese Mashell

Copyeditor
Baylee Cantrell
@bayleeisonline

Copyeditor
Samantha Heath
@samdoesjournalism

Faculty Advisor
Randy Loftis
940-565-3495//Randy.Loftis@unt.edu

Account Executive
Rich Edmond
214-793-3066//Richard.Edmond@unt.edu

Scan to sign up for our weekly newsletter, *The Daily Digest*

Denton shops adjust as new law bans disposable and cannabinoid vapes

SMOKE continued from page 1

"It is taking away a lot of foot traffic," McDaniel said. "People come in here asking for vapes. We say we don't have them, they immediately turn around. A lot of people, if they don't leave, they just get frustrated."

Both Stinky's Smoke Shop and The Zebra's Head employees said they have lost revenue due to SB 2024.

"I couldn't give an estimation off the top of my head, but there was a lot of money on these shelves that is just no longer there," McDaniel said.

Barron stated that while they are still able to sell and rely on revenue from other products, the ban was a "little bit of a hit" to the shop's revenue.

The Texas Department of State Health Services has said enforcement of the law will primarily fall to local law enforcement and regulatory inspections. Both McDaniel and Barron stated that they were not aware of any police presence in their shops to make sure they comply with SB 2024.

While smoke shops are adjusting to the ban, some users like university student Ray Hernandez say the ban is an opportunity to quit the habit.

Hernandez said he had tried quitting e-cigarettes several times, and said he once leaned on vapes as a stress-deterrant, but now says the lack of access is forcing him to "learn how to live with the stress anyway."

"I guess it's definitely encouraging the quitting of it [...] wanting to do it, especially because of the lack of access," Hernandez said.

Gov. Greg Abbott is also expected to issue an executive order setting new rules for THC sales after lawmakers disagreed on restrictions during the most recent special session last week. The order would likely set the purchasing age at 21, require ID checks and direct the Department of State Health Services to regulate labeling, testing and licensing.

Following the implementation of Senate Bill 2024 on Sept. 1, 2025, Denton smoke shops cleared their inventory of disposable and cannabinoid vapes. **Photo by Caitlin Goodsell**

Under SB 2024, some products remain legal, including rechargeable vape devices, nicotine e-liquids sold in refillable bottles and certain products that do not use colorful packaging and are manufactured in the United States.

University launches regional partnership for Texas Talent Accelerator to meet industry demands

By Tabitha Hidalgo
Staff Writer

University President Harrison Keller announced the launch of the Texas Talent Accelerator, a regional partnership designed to prepare North Texas for its rapidly changing workforce needs, at the Frisco campus.

The initiative brings together higher education institutions, employers and community partners to align academic programs with industry demands as the Dallas-Fort Worth area undergoes historic growth, according to CultureMap Dallas. Keller emphasized that the region is expected to surpass 10 million residents within the next decade, becoming the nation's third-largest metropolitan area.

"This region is the epicenter of one of the most remarkable economic growth stories in American history," Keller said.

The accelerator, announced Sept. 4, will serve as an "intelligence network," generating real-time data on industry needs and aligning academic curricula, work-based learning and professional credentials with high-demand jobs. It will also emphasize innovation and technological advancement across various in-demand sectors.

"This initiative represents a fundamental reimagining of how higher education and how employers could work together in a regional ecosystem to help us anticipate and meet our workforce needs, while driving innovation and technological advancement forward," Keller said.

The founding partners of the Texas Talent Accelerator include the university, Collin College, Dallas College, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, North Central Texas College, Strada Education Foundation, Texas State Technical College, Texas Woman's University, UNT Dallas and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation.

Deloitte US Chief Learning Officer Anthony Stephan and University President Harrison Keller speak during the Texas Talent Accelerator Launch Event at Frisco Landing on Sept. 4, 2025. **Photo by Ismael Beltran**

The coalition said it aims to build a model for regional collaboration that can be replicated across the state in order to align its economic growth with educational opportunities and workforce readiness.

"UNT is acting as a catalyst in the Texas Talent Accelerator, but it is not UNT alone," said Ben Magill, the accelerator's inaugural executive director and chief economic development officer. "The success will require the input and the collaboration from multiple institutions, multiple employers, and today, I want you to know that this launch is just the beginning."

Anthony Stephen, the chief learning officer at Deloitte US firms, joined Keller in a discussion and brief Q&A session discussing the challenges of collaboration and the importance of incorporating technical skills into current workflows.

"AI is not going to replace humans," Stephen said. "Humans that use AI will replace humans."

The discussion then shifted to an employer panel moderated by Angela Farley of the Dallas Regional Chamber. Panelists spoke about the pace of change across industries, emphasizing the rising need for both technical skills and human skills.

Melanie Vest, university alumna and chief financial officer at DATCU, said communication remains at the top of her list when hiring, but stressed it is not just about speaking well.

Steven Duong, senior vice president of global innovation of the infrastructure consulting firm AECOM, described the challenge in stark terms.

"We are facing almost an existential crisis in terms of the problems that need to be solved," Duong said, pointing to the need for systems thinking and technical communication skills as infrastructure projects grow in scale and complexity.

Cecilia Pacheco, senior vice president at Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America, said there is a challenge in navigating digital transformation in a highly regulated field.

"It's not just about training early-career talent," Pacheco said. "We also have to bring along our more experienced employees who may be resistant to new tools."

Peter Beard, senior vice president for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, urged the development of a shared "skills language" between educators and employers and bringing work-based experiences into classrooms.

"We need a common way to talk about competencies," Beard said. "And more importantly, we need people with a learning mindset who can adapt over the course of their careers."

District President of Collin College Neil Matkin and Chancellor of Dallas College Justin Lonon voiced concerns about the growing gap between Texas's economic opportunities and its workforce preparation. According to the university's website, this is despite the education institutions' reach of over 150,000 students within the partnership each year.

Lonon called for changes in higher education, calling its models "old, broken, dated and antiquated."

Research from Georgetown University predicts that 63 percent of jobs in Texas will require education beyond high school by 2031. Currently, about one-third of adults hold degrees or credentials at that level.

The Dallas-Fort Worth region hosts 24 of the state's 54 Fortune 500 headquarters, and according to the Texas Talent Accelerator website, the accelerator is intended to ensure that the area has the skilled workforce to support both current employers and future industries.

"We could triple the size of UNT, and it still wouldn't be enough on our own," Keller said. "We have to work together [...]. Lifelong learning isn't just beneficial, it's going to be essential."

Texas Woman's University cuts ribbon on first Welcome Center in newly renovated Brackenridge Hall

By Isabella Ferreri
Staff Writer

Texas Woman's University opened its first Welcome Center with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Brackenridge Hall at 402 Administration Drive.

The 84,000-square-foot building, initially constructed in 1916 as a dormitory and later repurposed in 1969 as the Student Union, has been renovated to serve as TWU's central hub for student services and campus visits.

The project took 18 months to complete and now houses admissions, financial aid, the registrar and the Career Connections Office. It also brings together several student life services and serves as the access point for campus tours, admissions counseling and visitor engagement.

"This Welcome Center is not only about convenience, it is about our identity," Chancellor and TWU President Carine Feyten said. "It tells every student and every visitor, 'This is Texas Woman's University' [...]. It reflects who we are: bold, welcoming, student-focused and always looking ahead."

Feyten said Brackenridge Hall was named after Mary Eleanor Brackenridge, one of TWU's very first regents. Brackenridge was also the first woman in Texas to serve on any board of regents across universities in Texas.

"She was a bold leader in Texas, a suffragist and an advocate for education," Feyten said. "To open this new Welcome Center under her name is to carry her pioneering spirit into a third chapter."

Javier Flores, a Denton resident and vice president for enrollment management, whose office is now in the Welcome Center, said he assists with admissions and financial aid for both domestic and international undergraduate and graduate students.

Mayor Gerard Hudspeth poses with TWU Chancellor and President Carine M. Feyten at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Welcome Center on Sept. 4, 2025. **Photo by Gabriella Ramirez**

"We have had growth among our first-time in college cohort students the past four years," Flores said. "Every fall that I've been here, we've been increasing enrollment among that cohort."

Flores said that the opening of the new Welcome Center has allowed them to bring in new technology that can enhance the atmosphere.

"Our individuals who work the welcome desk know that anytime someone walks in, there needs to be a 'Hi, how are you?' so you don't feel lost," Flores said. "The great thing is that we no longer have to say, 'You have to go to this building over there or this building over there.'"

Along with financial aid and the registrar's office, the Welcome Center, which opened on Sept. 4, offers students the Career Connections Office, which allows students to rehearse interviews with potential employers or even bring employers to do on-site interviews.

"It's a beautiful building, and when I look out the glass wall of my office, I see the column from the original structure that was built in 1969," Flores said. "It's exposed, so it gives you the history."

Denton Mayor Gerard Hudspeth, who attended the ceremony, said the city coordinated with TWU on infrastructure and utilities during construction.

"We have our quarterly meetings with them, just leadership meetings and talk about vision casting," Hudspeth said. "It's a public street, so we discussed how we manage the street construction with the semesters, making sure we're cohesive and take a holistic approach to serving the city and making sure they have what they need."

Hudspeth said TWU paid for the construction, while the city provided electricity.

"When you are talking about utilities and permits and working around that, we make sure those things go fast," Hudspeth said. "Like the chancellor said, 'They were on time and on budget.' We're making sure we get them what they need to progress and keep the project moving [...]. It requires a synergy of working together."

TWU English literature junior Joey Groves, who has been working as a student assistant in Brackenridge Hall since 2023, said the building looked vastly different before renovations.

Groves said they have already been utilizing the resources the new Welcome Center has to offer with its convenient location.

"Whenever my shift was over here, [if] I had a question for financial aid, I just walked over and got to go over my finances," Groves said. "It has been pretty helpful. I've taken advantage of how close financial aid has been."

Feyten said the Welcome Center is designed to support both current students and those considering attending TWU, which will mark its 125th anniversary in 2026.

"Now with this Welcome Center, we are investing in the very first impression that we give to those who will carry Texas Woman's University into the next 125 years," Feyten said.

NEWS AROUND THE U.S.

By Shehzil Imran & Diego Hernandez
News Editor/Deputy News Editor

Federal data shows U.S. job growth overstated by 911,000

In a benchmark revision released Sept. 9, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed that job growth over the 12 months that ended in March, was overestimated by 911,000 positions, thereby cutting the previously reported gains of 1.79 million jobs by more than half. The revision, which is the largest since 2000, spans sectors from leisure and hospitality to manufacturing. The findings raised fresh questions from investors about labor-market strength and heightened pressure on the Federal Reserve to cut rates.

OpenAI faces pressure over restructure to for-profit model

OpenAI's leadership is under pressure as political and legal opposition grows over its plan to restructure from a nonprofit-controlled entity to a for-profit model. Facing investigations from the California and Delaware attorney generals into potential violations of charitable trust laws, the company is scrambling to secure more than $19 million in conditional funding if needed for AI expansion. OpenAI has offered compromises, such as maintaining nonprofit oversight, and is seeking political support in Sacramento, California. Amid this, executives have considered relocating out of California if regulators block the transition.

Supreme Court to hear arguments over legality of Trump's tariffs

The Supreme Court agreed on Sept. 9 to listen to arguments over President Donald Trump's tariffs. On Sept. 3, he urged the justices to look into and overturn an Aug. 29 lower court ruling. The ruling, receiving a split decision, stated that the Trump administration acted unlawfully in imposing the current tariffs on imports. According to The Washington Post, though a 1977 law allows the president "emergency powers over the economy," the lower court ruled that it does not apply to Trump's tariffs and that the administration overstepped its authority. The court will begin to listen to the case in November, stating that they will expedite their decision. The current tariffs will remain in place as is until the court makes its decision.

Trump's request to pause foreign aid temporarily granted by Supreme Court

On Sept. 9, the Supreme Court approved President Donald Trump's request for him to keep about $4.9 billion in U.S. foreign aid frozen. Before this, a lower court's judge ordered Trump to spend the aid money by the end of the month, which is also the end of the fiscal year. Toward the end of August, Trump used a "pocket recession," meaning he submitted a request to Congress not to spend the money. Chief Justice John Roberts, responsible for emergency appeals, issued an administrative stay, allowing justices more time to review the situation.

Denton kicks off month-long ecology event with Eco-Fair and bird walk

POLLINATORS continued from page 1

The 30 Days of Pollinators events are organized by Denton Parks and Recreation employee Chione Lawton, who is earning their master's in environmental science at the university. Lawton has been actively improving Denton's green spaces through a city project called Prairie Pathways, where individuals are working to create native prairies in over 300 acres of unused space in 19 sites around Denton.

Lawton and other community members have created an interactive map showing each green space and the species observations they have made. Lawton said these projects have started Denton's restoration and conservation journeys off strong.

"I got a lot of people finding out about, not just this program, but these other [organizations] and I feel like this is the important start we needed," Lawton said. "People start learning about them, start becoming excited about them and they start seeking more knowledge."

The Eco-Fair took place from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and involved over 14 local organizations. These groups ranged from city organizations like the Denton Fire Department and Sustainable Denton, to university student groups and Girl Scouts.

Each organization had its own table, complete with educational information and activities for attendees of all ages. Swaim also helped tend the UNT Bird Campus Committee's table, which had information about local native bird species and what people can do to help conserve them.

"When we educate people on the importance of birds, we also educate them on ways to help promote a safe environment for them to live," Swaim said. "I think it's good to let people know all the ways they can contribute, and hopefully they spread the word too."

Madalyn Chandler, university senior and member of the university's chapter of the Society of Ecological Restoration, a national organization focused on restoring biodiversity, created a game for the event. The game allowed attendees to match eight seeds to pictures of a native plant and identify an invasive species called Johnsongrass, which Chandler said is one of the most abundant invasive species.

Chandler said this game is meant to highlight the importance of identifying native plants as well as spread awareness about invasive species to enact change in communities like Denton.

"The world is changing rapidly and there's only so much we can do, but the more we do, the longer we'll be okay," Chandler said. "The longer we'll have clean water, sustainable food, and a natural environment that isn't a concrete hellscape, we'll instead have something to connect with."

SER member Madalyn Chandler tables at the eco-fair during the 30 Days of Pollinators celebration at Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center on Sept. 6, 2025. **Photo by Dilip Devanda**

Lawton said they use the iNaturalist app every day, which makes them curious and encourages them to examine everything around them with a magnifying glass. Lawton described ecology restoration as their passion and hopes the Denton community falls in love with thriving green spaces.

"You get to restore and recreate an environment and watch everything come back," Lawton said. "It's hands-on, very involved and no day is the same as the next because restoration starts from the soil up."

During the Eco-Fair, Lawton discussed with attendees the importance of incorporating prairie grass into Denton's green spaces, highlighting how its long roots benefit the ecosystem's soil. Lawton created a handmade scale model for kids to guess how long the roots of prairie grass are. The kids would then pull on the top of the cardboard plant model until the 15-foot-long roots made of yarn came trailing out.

Lawton said they constantly had people at their table spinning for prizes, using the plant model and wanting to learn about native flora and fauna. Lawton said this was precisely the kind of engagement they were hoping would come out of 30 Days of Pollinators.

"The fact that I was so busy I couldn't step away from my trifold for a second is a grace that I was given," Lawton said. "I think it couldn't have gone better and I hope everyone enjoyed it."

Things To Do:

Looking for Players Thursday

When: Thursday, Sept. 11 at 7 p.m.
Where: d20 Tavern, 112 W Oak St.
What: A weekly recurring event at d20 Tavern, a home for Dungeons and Dragons players and bar, the night features open-table instructions and different games every week. One of their expert House Gamemasters will be on hand to set up, teach, and guide attendees through this unique board game experience. Tickets are $12 and include a beer to enjoy while playing. Attendees can purchase their ticket in advance online, or simply walk in ready to play every Thursday at 7 p.m.

'Carrie:' The Musical

When: Friday, Sept. 12 at 7:30 p.m.
Where: Campus Theatre, 214 W Hickory St.
What: Carrie is bullied at school and dominated by her cruel mother at home. When she discovers that she has a special power, she does not hesitate to use it when pushed too far. This musical, presented by the community theater group Denton Theatre, contains mild adult themes but is open to all ages. Friday's performance will be their opening night, and tickets are $27 for adults and $20 for students and children.

Arts and Autos

When: Saturday, Sept. 13 at 9 a.m.
Where: Downtown Denton Square
What: Organized by the Greater Denton Arts Council and Denton Main Street Association, the event will feature a car parade, live car painting, a Q&A session, bidding, food, a DJ and more. Participants will also have the chance to paint a car during the event. Car collectors and enthusiasts are welcome to enter their vehicle for a chance to be awarded a custom trophy as voted on by event judges and community members.

British post-punk band Shame trades 'quiet life' for something greater on newest album

By Matthew Winter
Arts & Life/The Dose Editor

Hailing from South London, Shame knows a thing or two about what a good punk band should stand for.

With previous legendary Londoners such as the Sex Pistols and The Clash, who are pioneers in the scene, the mid-2010s band has massive shoes to fill in terms of "being punk." However, their newest album, "Cutthroat," marks a departure from the harsher sound they are known for.

Released on Sept. 5, the 37-minute album features 12 tracks ranging in their sonic landscape. Some with brazen tones that could stir any mosh-pit, something they are known for, to softer ballads with sermon-esque lyrics.

The diversity presented on "Cutthroat" signals the band trying out various styles, venturing into brand new sounds, such as the album's moments of electronic dance. However, they successfully landed somewhere in the middle of psych-rock, pop and punk.

This evolution in the band's sound is spoken of within the first three minutes on the title-track and opener, "Cutthroat." Frontman Charlie Steen states in the lyrics,"'Cause I'm afraid to stay the same." Steen continues as roaring guitar riffs and punchy drums fill the background, "So why not do what you wanna do."

While the opener has great tone-setting and lyrical content, the second track, "Cowards Around," would almost make for a better opener. With its themes of political unrest and the band calling politicians "cowards," the track has some of the hardest-hitting drums and forward lyrics.

The idea of being themselves and brave in the face of political issues and their newfound stardom fits well with the album's mercurial "see what sticks" attitude. Each track feels as if the five-piece band sat down and recorded what sounded fun and right at the time. Steen said in an interview with Dork magazine, "'Life's far too important to be taken seriously.'"

Illustration by Vianne Ciuro

"Cutthroats" third track, "Quiet Life," is one of the few that misses the mark, however. Being one of the singles released in preparation for the project's release, the band plays it a lot safer with simple love-based lyrics and reserved production. The song is not bad, though it feels basic and radio-ready, making it the most pop-sounding on the entire album. The song is something to count against the group when considering the band's punk origins and biggest inspiration, Manchester band The Fall.

Next, after the previous songs' detour, the album continues with a British pop-punk banger. "Nothing Better," while still sounding like a made-for-radio track, succeeds at being a great song anyway. The lyrics speak on suburban boredom and how the modern blueprint for city planning in the internet age leads to conspiracy and violence.

"Plaster," a standout for its playful late '90s to early 2000s melody-defining synth that — combined with its tambourine — nostalgically clings to the chorus. The next track, "Spartak," keeps the feeling with its blippy synth notes and piano trills that are pertinent to the track's lyrics: a song about being less judgmental to others.

"To and Fro" hands down has the best hook on the album. With a powerful crescendo into the chorus, it speaks on the band's feelings about stardom, Steen singing that the "hunger" for fame gets him out of bed, the taste ultimately becoming bittersweet and lackluster.

With the next song, Shame takes a note out of legendary band Talking Heads' book with "Lampião." With the song's monologued lyrics and instrumentation, Steen tells the story of Virgulino Ferreira da Silva. The Brazilian bandit, commonly known as Lampião, is a regional folk hero for his acts of courage against hard odds. "Lampião" is a standout for the band's attempt at something new in its production.

After standout "Lampião," "After Party," has some of the best sounds in the entire album. From its noise-rock hook to an inspiring, danceable chorus, it sounds like it would fit right in at a coming-of-age movie. However, its ostinato lyrics make the track a chore to listen to on repeat.

"Screwdriver," one of the hardest-hitting on the project, is gushing with wall-to-wall distortion that stands front and center in the brain. Shame lets loose and gives their all in this track, gearing up for the penultimate track.

The album's best song, "Packshot," is toned back and still loudly abrasive in a way only Shame can truly get. Harkening back to the band's 2021 album "Drunk Tank Pink" with its climactic chorus and epic culmination of sound, the peak of the album is found within these four minutes.

The glittery chords and emotional meltdown found in "Packshot" are exchanged for an off-the-wall closer with a near purely electronic track, a choice that sounds abstract in comparison to the previous 11 songs. While the song is a bizarre closer, it fits perfectly with the band's notion of doing what they want.

Shame's fourth studio album is a great culmination of what the band can and cannot do. While it does not surpass their previous works, the group succeeds at being different within their own discography, and the project is a well-formed evolution.

Matthew's rating: 4.5 /5

Icon of the Week:

Adrianne Lenker

Credit **Ralph_PH**

This week's icon is Adrianne Lenker for her newest album, "Double Infinity," released with her band, Big Thief, on Sept. 5.

Born July 9, 1991, 34-year-old Adrianne Elizabeth Lenker is the lead vocalist, guitarist and songwriter of Grammy-nominated indie folk band Big Thief, who has been active since the mid-2010s.

Originally, Lenker spent the first four years of her life raised in a Christian cult outside of Indianapolis, where the artist was originally born. However, at the age of five, Lenker and her family moved to Minnesota, where they all lived out of a large blue van.

The artist and her family lived in a van that constantly moved around the Midwest portion of the United States. Lenker's father, a songwriter himself, taught her the basics of music production, and by 12, she would play open mic nights at several bars. At 13, Lenker had recorded her first full-length album with her father as her manager.

With her unique vocal style, Lenker has likened her songwriting process to a "collaboration with the universe." Lenker has also released several solo projects outside of Big Thief, including "Bright Future," (2024) which was nominated for a Grammy award.

NCT WISH injects much-needed 'COLOR' into the music scene with third mini album

By Samantha Heath
Copyeditor

Breaking their record in first-day sales on the Hanteo charts, J-pop group NCT WISH released their third mini album "COLOR" on Sept. 1, four months after the release of their second mini album "poppop" on April 14.

NCT WISH is unique as the Japanese subunit – a smaller group formed from members of a larger K-pop act – of Neo Culture Technology, which also includes groups like NCT 127, NCT Dream and their Chinese subunit WayV.

Although NCT WISH is considered the Japanese subunit, they sometimes sing entirely in Korean, like in this mini album.

While slightly deviating from their usual bubble gum pop sound to experiment more in the realm of R&B and electropop, they continue to show an impressive ability to innovate in a way that keeps their music sounding fresh and unique. NCT WISH has consistently had a vibrant style, both in songs and branding alike, and this album is no exception.

The album opens with the title track "COLOR," an energetic electropop number bursting with personality. Although not as replayable as the group's last title track due to being a little overstimulating, there is no denying that the bold, synthesizer-led track hits hard. The vibrant production is immediately captivating, creating a dynamic introduction that really shows how NCT WISH is going to bring out the color.

Following the title track, "Baby Blue," which was pre-released on Aug. 25, sets up the aforementioned new direction for the group, blending R&B and pop styles. The arrangement is noticeably more erratic than anything the group has done before. The chorus feels awkward in its payoff, consistently reaching a climax without any buildup, which is overwhelming due to mixed production. Although it may feel a bit off-putting on the first listen, repeated plays reveal a delightful composition reminiscent of peculiar sounds found in songs like "dumb dumb" by Mazie.

The third track, "Surf," released earlier this year on Aug. 12, fully expresses the late-summer vibe the boys always flawlessly embody in their music. The track indulges in the last feeling of pure summer bliss before the music industry fully embraces the start of the fall season, lovingly capturing an intimate moment hidden behind the backdrop of a refreshing tune.

"Cheat Code" ushers in and puts the videogame-esque sound that permeates throughout the album, with clever lyrics like "Even after eating a hundred coins, I still can't see it" and "If I pass through the dragon's fiery flames / Will I meet you at the end of it?" amplifying the song's sound. This, along with an infectious instrumental and lovely vocals, arguably make it the best on the mini album.

Illustration by Vianne Ciuro

The album takes an interesting turn with the hip-hop track "Videohood," which takes on a mature tone only seen previously in "CHOO CHOO" and other songs released by fellow NCT subunits. The song highlights members Sakuya and Riku's addictive rap flow, while also showcasing new vocal performances from members Sion, Ryo, Yushi and Jaehee. Despite having quirky lyrics, this only adds to the appeal of the song and makes the track an entertaining listen.

Although the next song unfortunately samples "With You" by Chris Brown, "Wichu" is an upbeat R&B track with pleasing harmonies and lively melody. While a bit basic in its execution, the meaning behind the song will make fans smile, as the term "Wichu" refers to the group's adorable winged mascot. The phrase "With You" can also be seen as a cute pronunciation of "Wichu," adding to the song's charm.

The album concludes on a calm note with "Reel-ationship," where the boys reflect on a possible budding relationship sparked by exchanging cat videos. As silly as the premise may seem, it fits seamlessly with the youthful feeling of the album. The song plays out like a natural extension of the group's allure, bringing the album to a gentle and fitting close.

"COLOR" perfectly encapsulates the special energy that NCT WISH brings to both the J-pop and K-pop music industry, and proves their music will only strengthen to encompass a wide variety of genres as time goes on.

Samantha's rating: 4.5/5

Sophomore wide receiver Miles Coleman overcomes doubts about height throughout football career

SOPHOMORE
continued from page 1

"They really were pursuing me and wanted me on the team, and I appreciated that more than anything else [...]," Coleman said. "I think the connection with the coaches and just how much they believed in me gave me my decision to pick North Texas."

Coleman signed with the Mean Green on Dec. 20, 2023, and enrolled at the university the following June. Coleman saw little action throughout most of his first season, but through his time on the sidelines, he got used to the speed of Division I football and learned from older players. Although he credits his speed and route running as his strengths, the insight he gained in his freshman year proved to be invaluable.

Offensive Coordinator Jordan Davis helped develop Coleman's confidence and play. As a result, Coleman produced the best version of himself by fully investing in Davis' offense.

"Miles is a stud, and we know that [...]," Davis said Aug. 15 at North Texas' fall camp. "Even though he's going to be a sophomore, he knows this offense probably [better] than everyone in my room, to be honest with you. He could play all four positions."

One of Coleman's best friends is redshirt freshman Baron Tipton, his roommate and another wideout on the team. They are together all the time, whether it be tossing a football around to each other at their apartment or running drills side-by-side at practice.

In contrast to his teammate, Tipton is the tallest listed receiver at 6 feet and 5 inches. Although Tipton is more of a physical receiver with his size, he respects Coleman's style of play and how he uses his assets to his advantage.

Sophomore wide receiver Miles Coleman runs past a Lamar defender at DATCU Stadium on Aug. 30, 2025. **Photo by Trennt Rhea**

"He's short, but he's really quick and fast," Tipton said. "He's really smooth when you watch him run routes. You could not guess what he was going to do. He's really good at finding open space and making people miss."

Coleman showed he will be essential to the receiving core in the team's 51-0 win over Lamar on Aug. 30. In his 5-5 performance for 52 yards, he eluded defenders with ease and proved his speed is a game-changer.

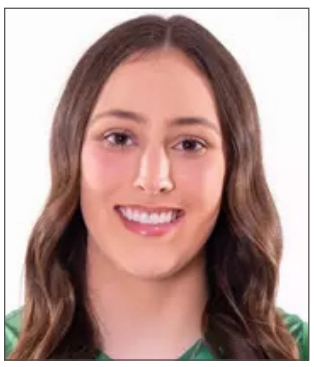
It is senior receiver Cameron Dorner's first year with North Texas after transferring from Shepherd University, but he already has a good pulse on Coleman and his role.

"He's not the biggest talker, but he comes in every single day and you know what he's about," Dorner said. "There's no question on his effort or [if] he's willing to go out there and complete the job. If I was the coach, I would be wanting to put him out on the field because not only is he fast, athletic and catches the ball, but he knows his job and what to do. He's very smart."

***Editor's note: This story was originally published online and has been shortened for print. Read more at* ntdaily.com.**

Athlete of the Week:

Reagan Bedell



Credit **Mean Green Sports**

Sophomore outside hitter Reagan Bedell recorded 26 kills in the team's 3-1 win over Stetson on Sept. 6. Her performance sits just outside the program's top performances with the fifth most kills in a four-set North Texas game being 27. Bedell's 27 kills is the highest of the season for any Mean Green player and a new career high. Her best performance came in the team's decisive fourth set where she recorded 11 kills on 16 attacks with zero errors. North Texas eventually won the set 25-18 and the team's win improved the record to 4-2 with six more non conference games left in their schedule. On the season so far, Bedell has a team-leading 81 kills in 21 sets played with also the team's highest kills per set with 3.86. Both markers are higher than her stats from last season where she finished with 70 kills in 45 sets played with an average 1.56 kills per set.

North Texas to attempt 'Sellout DATCU' for second year, aims for full attendance for first time in program history

By Haylie Stum
Senior Sports Writer

In the 14 years since DATCU Stadium opened in 2011, the venue has not reached its maximum capacity, hosting 52 home games. The Mean Green athletic department looks to change that by promoting its second year of the "Sellout DATCU" initiative this week on Sept. 13 against Washington State University.

The "TAKE FLIGHT" strategic plan, approved in 2023, set out multiple goals to boost game participation, such as averaging 23,000 fans per home game and selling out at least one matchup at the stadium per year.

The athletic department locked down large ticket purchases from several businesses for the game, but Smith feels a crucial piece to get over the hump will be the potential turnout of the school community.

"I think, frankly, where we felt a little bit short last year was we didn't get as many students as we wanted to [...]," said Connor Smith, associate vice president and chief operating officer of athletics. "We feel that we're going to have a very competitive team this year, but it's really the buy-in from campus and trying to leverage the football game."

Members of the Mean Green Maniacs throw green powder in the air right at kickoff against Tulane on Oct. 26, 2024. **Photo by Ismael Beltran**

This will be the second season the program has tagged a game "Sellout DATCU" in hopes of filling the stadium. In the department's first attempt against the University of Wyoming in 2024, the Mean Green came up short, selling 27,049 tickets out of 30,100.

A group trying to drum up attendance is the Mean Green Maniacs, the formal name for the North Texas student section. Senior Maniac leader Jake Levine believes campus participation is on the rise, but reaching an at-capacity crowd will require a second wind of engagement from fans.

"The reason it's never been done before is due to a lack of consistent postseason success [...]," Levine said. "There's definitely a chance, but until we achieve the sellout, it'll feel like an uphill battle."

The venue came close to being full twice before its capacity decreased from 30,850 in 2024. The attempts occurred in consecutive years, with a crowd of 30,105 against Louisiana Tech in 2018 and 30,123 people in attendance in the game against the University of Houston in 2019.

The game has the potential to be a marquee game for the program. North Texas starts its season 2-0 against a Washington State team that carries a recognizable brand. It does not guarantee an uptick in ticket sales, however, as proven in years past.

The Mean Green's stadium logged 21,349 fans in their Power Five meeting with the University of California in 2023. When No. 15 University of Texas at San Antonio came to town in 2021, just shy of 17,000 people attended the game.

Instead of relying on the on-the-field matchup, the athletic department's strategy to sell out DATCU Stadium involves pushing more encompassing events not directly involved with football.

"One thing we always talk about in athletics is, 'Hey, let's throw a really big party and have a great time, and by the way, there's a football game going on as well,'" Smith said. "I think we want this to be a really holistic experience where everyone has a great time, we win the game and people will continue to come back."

The matchup against Washington State aligns with the university's Family Weekend, a choice to garner additional attendance from family members of students. The athletic department partnered with the university's College of Music to launch "Rockin' at DATCU," another promotional effort to increase game traffic.

"Rockin' at DATCU" will be a musical entertainment event to supplement the game day environment. Tom "Bones" Malone, a university alumnus and jazz musician, serves as the headliner of the experience, where he will sing the national anthem and perform alongside the Green Brigade in the halftime show.

The integration of live music into the matchup against the Cougars stretches beyond Malone. Mean Green Live performances are part of the pregame concert series slated to take place in fan zones and tailgate hotspots. High School Band Day and Alumni Band Day will also take place at Saturday's game.

"It takes the support of everyone within the community [and] within the student body," said Shannon Halbritter, senior associate athletic director for marketing and fan engagement. "So that's why we make it a big deal to partner with the people on campus because we ask them to support us, but then we also want to support them. It's all of us coming together and making that sellout game we need."

The department is also advertising "organized chaos" during the game. They intend to throw out a variety of enticing items such as jerseys, hats and other items to the crowd. Additionally, Jared Mosley, vice president and director of athletics, pledged to do the team's signature "Stone Cold Steve Austin" celebration in front of the student section at kickoff if the student attendance record of 8,970 is broken.

Through awareness, the athletics department, in partnership with the Maniacs, hopes to change the score.

"The more people that know about the game and about the fact that [the team] is 2-0, the more people will come," Levine said. "It's always strength in numbers, and if more people know about the significance of selling out the stadium, we'll have a good turnout."

North Texas tennis reloads for season with veteran core, confident mindset

By Dante Longoria
Staff Writer

The smack of racquets, scuff of sneakers and echo of smashing serves reverberate across the Waranch Tennis Complex as North Texas tennis prepares for its Sept. 12 season opener.

This past season, the Mean Green reached the semifinals of the Universal Tennis Rating Women's National Invitation Tournament, marking their first postseason appearance since 2014.

Additionally, the team went 11-10 and had its first winning record in its spring dual match season since the 2018-19 season. Building on two years of growth, head coach Amanda Stone said her third season is about executing that groundwork into results that last through the postseason.

"It's good to have a group that's feisty and fights hard," Stone said. "Now that we've established who we are on the court, it's time to really prove the next step."

To start their path to reaching those goals, Stone said the team began with the best first practice she has seen in her time at the university.

"It was the best first practice in my time at North Texas, maybe the best in my career," Stone said. "Everyone was prepared and intense. Our freshmen didn't look lost. They looked confident in what they were trying to do, and we've carried that on since."

Then sophomore tennis player Carolina Laydner swings at the ball against Tyler Junior College at the Waranch Tennis Complex on April 12, 2025. **Photo by Ismael Beltran**

A large portion of their established foundation has been the team's experienced upperclassmen. This year's roster features five returning players, including seniors Stadfany Nformi and Marina Adati, along with juniors Carolina Laydner, Lilly Schultz and Lou Chalard.

To Stone, the continuity of the roster has given North Texas its identity and leadership heading into the fall.

"We have the same core group that's been here with me since day one, and they've always been the heartbeat of the team," Stone said. "Now, stepping further into leadership roles, I think that creates the best environment for our freshmen."

One of the team's chosen leaders is Laydner, as Stone selected her as the team's captain during the offseason. Laydner, who competed in the main draw singles of the 2023 Australian Junior Open, returns from three months of training in her native country of Brazil and looks to set the tone for the program.

"Any leadership position is earned from the respect of those around you," Laydner said. "I'm excited to lead by example at practice and in matches, battle hard this year and work closely with the coaches to bring a player's perspective."

Along with the team veterans, the Mean Green added freshmen Pia Petelinsek and Giulianna Drpic to the rotation. They are additions to the team's "attitude, effort and energy" mantra that Stone said will also focus on finishing strong.

"That's our standard every day," Stone said. "We're getting in the habit of saying 'last one, best one' at each practice. At the end of a match, we want to be the best on the court."

Before the home opener, the experience of a senior player has already translated to results. Nformi opened her fall campaign by claiming the championship at the UTR Pro Tennis Tour event in Champaign, Illinois, Sept. 2–7.

Nformi went unbeaten in group play before advancing through the semifinals, setting up a thrilling final against junior-level competitor Ellery Mendell. Trailing 6-3 in a decisive final set tiebreak, Nformi mounted a dramatic comeback, winning the final five points of the match to take the tiebreak 8-6 and capture the title.

Nformi's early season success follows up the team's spring last season, when North Texas closed with a 6-3 record that included a home win over nationally ranked Tulane University. The Green Wave ultimately eliminated the Mean Green 4-2 in the first round of the American Conference Tournament.

Yet, the late season surge, coupled with postseason experience, has given the program a boost of momentum heading into this fall.

"The way we competed last year put us on people's radar," Stone said. "This year, the goal is to finish and turn close matches into wins."

With Laydner leading as captain and a trio of experienced players steadying the lineup, North Texas enters the season with elevated expectations.

The Mean Green will open the season Sept. 12-14 by hosting the Driving Eagle Invite at Waranch Tennis Complex. This past season, the team went 8-1 on its home court and will aim to continue the recent trend of winning at home in their fall singles season.

"College tennis is about staying tough in difficult moments," Schultz said. "Matches can be decided by just a few points. In doubles, I play relaxed and try to bring that same energy into singles."

At a Glance:

Football

The North Texas football team (2-0) returns to Denton undefeated after a 33-30 overtime win against Eastern Michigan (0-2), to face an undefeated Washington State (2-0) on Sept. 13. The Mean Green's redshirt freshman quarterback Drew Mestemaker finished with 224 yards, completing 18 of his 33 attempts while also recording two passing touchdowns. Sophomore running back Makenzie McGill II sealed the win with a last-second touchdown run while recording 102 yards on 16 attempts. Defensively, the Mean Green's senior linebackers Shane Whitter and Trey Fields led in tackles with 12 and 11 respectively.

Volleyball

Mean Green volleyball (4-2) will play its first home game against Little Rock (2-4) on Sept. 12 in a rematch of a previous Aug. 29 matchup that ended in a 3-1 North Texas win. In the last time the two teams faced off, sophomore outside hitter Regan Bedell led the team with 17 kills. After Little Rock, North Texas will also face Northwestern State (1-6) on Sept. 13 and the undefeated University of Texas at Arlington (6-0) on Sept. 14. The game against the Trojans will be the only game at the team's North Texas Volleyball Center with the others on the road.

Cross Country

North Texas cross country is going to compete in its second meet of the season at the Texas A&M Invitational on Sept. 13 at College Station. The Mean Green finished third on the men's side and ranked outside of the top four on the women's side in the UCA Bear XC Invitational in Conway, Arkansas on Aug. 30. The best finish by a runner on either team was junior distance runner Aditi Silwal who finished tenth in the three-mile run with a time of 18 minutes and 15.33 seconds.

Mean Green women's golf tees off fall season with a second-place finish at the Sam Golden Invitational

By Carson Kelly
Staff Writer

The Mean Green women's golf team hosted the two-day-long Sam Golden Invitational to start the new season on Sept. 8. North Texas tied for second place at the invitational, beating 10 other programs.

After the third and final round, the team finished the sitting 24-under-par tied with the University of Tulsa. Junior Bouquet Subsomboon led all Mean Green golfers with 10-under-par for a second-place tie in the player rankings.

The program is familiar with the event, having hosted the invitational previously in 2021 and 2023. The team also practiced and had qualifiers at the same course this offseason.

"We definitely have a big advantage over other people because we know the course like the back of our hands," senior golfer Mason Lewis said.

Though this year has started on a positive note, the team entered the season after a disappointing finish this past year for the Mean Green.

After three straight NCAA Regional appearances, the team was ranked No. 1 in the conference going into this past spring. However, as the season progressed, they did not reach a fourth straight regional after an 11th-place finish at the University of Texas' Betsy Rawls Invitational in March.

"The course was set up very hard, the wind was ripping, and we played really poorly," head coach Michael Akers said. "I think mentally that hurt us. It hurt us in the rankings and took us away from the NCAA Regional bubble."

After a fifth-place finish at the American Conference Championship, the Mean Green were invited to the Golfweek National Golf Invitational, a postseason event where they finished third on May 9.

Akers said the main issue preventing an NCAA Tournament appearance was roster depth.

"Our arguably number one player was hurt the entire year, so we just didn't have the depth," Akers said. "But I'm really excited about this year with where we are."

This year's Mean Green roster includes three upperclassmen who made the American's All-Conference Team this past year – Subsomboon, Lewis and graduate student Malisone Chanthapanya – who were also the team's top three leading scorers.

For Lewis and Chanthapanya, this could be their last dance with the program.

"I really want to put my heart into everything this last year," Lewis said. "I owe it to my team and I owe it to myself to put my all into it."

Chanthapanya spent three years at Texas Wesleyan University and became a three-time National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics All-American. In 2024, she transferred to North Texas and finished third-best on the team with an average score of 74.09. She was granted an additional year of eligibility for 2025.

"I was actually really excited when I found out I had the opportunity to come back for a fifth year because this program is really great and the people are amazing," Chanthapanya said. "I've just been really excited to come back and that I get to spend time and play golf at a lot of nice courses and with good competition."

Half of the roster are upperclassmen who bring prior experience that Akers said has been invaluable for the younger athletes new to the program.

"Our upperclassmen have done a really good job, Mali [Chanthapanya is] certainly a mentor to the younger players," Akers said. "To have her in there and advising them on how the dorm works, how the cafeteria works, those things are huge. She is out here all the time, and they see the work ethic."

The two freshmen are a duo that Akers described as part of the "best recruiting class [he has] ever signed." Freshman golfers Marin Fujiyasu and Victoria Georgieva are from Japan and Bulgaria, respectively. Both golfers have wins at the amateur and high school levels at domestic and international events.

"I recruit swings and I don't mess them up," Akers said. "The number one thing is to find players that have the work ethic because most of them want to turn pro, so they put in the extra time [...]. They all go above and beyond."

Beyond the team's second-place finish at the Sam Golden Invitational, expectations are to return to the NCAA Regional after the team missed it last season and finished fifth at the American Conference Championship. Akers, who has guided the program to four previous appearances, said this past year's finish gave the team the necessary lessons to take into the rest of this season.

"I think last year was kind of a learning curve for both myself and the team," Chanthapanya said. "We were all playing good, but I think it was hard for us to all sync up and play good at the same time [...] I think that was a good perspective, a kind of splash of cold water on us. Trying to get us to come back stronger this year."

Head coach Michael Akers talks to Senior golfer Mason Lewis and Graduate student Malisone Chanthapanya during practice on Sept. 4, 2025. **Photo by Leonardo Blanco**

Denton's public-private partnerships to address homelessness hurt people without housing rather than assist the community

By Kyson Barber
Staff Writer

Denton's involvement and direct response to the rise in homelessness are not sufficient. The city's reliance on public-private partnerships has led to Denton failing people without housing.

Denton has seen a 33 percent rise in homelessness in the past year alone, and yet this has not sparked a notable change from local officials. Instead, the city's website highlights initiatives and strategies implemented in 2016. Clearly, these strategies have not worked.

In 2020, Denton purchased a property off Loop 288 that became the city's homeless shelter. Instead of running it directly, Denton handed operations over to Our Daily Bread. Our Daily Bread is a nonprofit organization that runs Denton's primary homeless shelter.

Denton provided the building that Our Daily Bread occupies, but only provides occasional funding. Under this public-private partnership with Our Daily Bread, Denton leaves the nonprofit to shoulder nearly all financial responsibility, mostly through donations.

Earlier this year, these struggles became more apparent as Our Daily Bread failed an internal audit, followed by a lawsuit against the shelter for negligence and lack of accommodations. City officials have placed the blame entirely on Our Daily Bread by filing a plea that claims independence from the shelter.

Even after the legal flak they have come under, the organization's response was even worse than the city shirking responsibility. Our Daily Bread, which was supposed to have a viable emergency shelter option along with offering 24/7 services, dropped both commitments, stating they want to "do better with what we have," according to the Denton Record-Chronicle.

Our Daily Bread has been the main leg of Denton's homelessness response, and even this was inadequate in getting the majority of people without housing sheltered, with 235 unhoused individuals reported in 2024, according to the Denton Record-Chronicle. The minimal amount of support the city provides the nonprofit is not enough when the number of people experiencing homelessness keeps increasing.

Our Daily Bread is a failure due to a lack of oversight and financial support from Denton, which allowed the shelter to become overcrowded and deprived it of the resources needed to thrive.

In addition to the lack of support for shelters, Denton also allocated funding to the Downtown Denton Ambassador Program. The program is another private corporation for public services intended to provide hospitality services to the city and, in extension, aid the homeless population. Helping the city's homeless community, however, is not the main objective of the program.

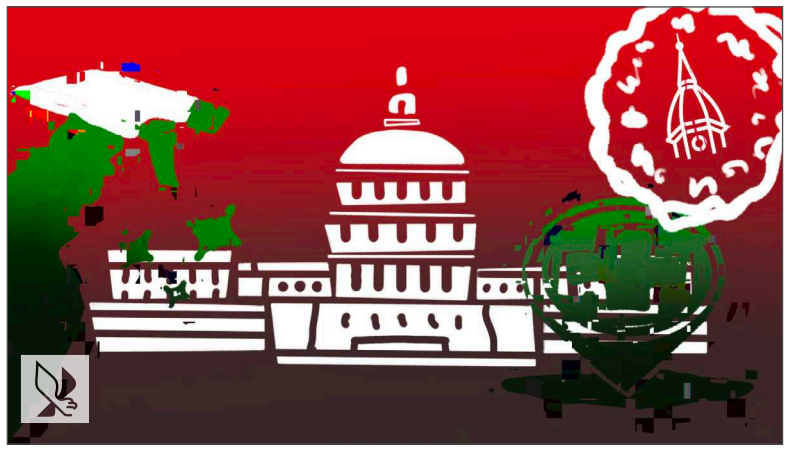
The Downtown Denton Ambassador Program is a two-year pilot program funded by Denton at approximately $708,300 annually, totaling just over $1.4 million since its inception. However, there is concern for what actionable changes Denton residents, particularly those seeking to support people without housing, are seeing from the program. The answer is very little, especially when compared to the money that is being dedicated to the program, while Denton's city spending budget is facing a deficit entering 2026.

The program's main mission, according to its website, is to "help build and maintain a clean, safe, and thriving downtown." This program maintains the Denton Square by keeping it clean, as well as providing services to people in the Square. This includes addressing people without housing who use the area for shelter and redirecting them via referral to Our Daily Bread or another shelter.

However, many Denton residents believe the number of people experiencing homelessness is still a problem since the referrals given are neither tracked nor followed up with.

The program has achieved success in its mission to maintain litter cleanliness in Denton's Downtown Square and assists shop owners with their safety walks. The resources they are tasked with providing to homeless people, such as referrals, do not help them in any substantial way since they require more than just a referral to ensure that individuals receive shelter. Often, service resources are allocated to the same homeless individuals, leading to a cycle of repeated service without meaningful support.

The city needs to take more accountability to create an actionable response, including better funding and



Illustrated by Victoria Maldonado

providing the necessary resources for people without housing.

A shelter with 24/7 services is essential for addressing homelessness. Denton could have provided this and overseen the operations directly and easily. The city should invest more consistently in the shelters, given its higher funding compared to Our Daily Bread, and therefore take greater accountability.

More support from the city could alleviate both staffing and general funding issues. On top of that, shelters would have more direct integration with city resources, which allows for more efficient initiatives.

The City Council recommended $291,107 of hotel occupancy tax funding be reallocated to the Downtown Denton Ambassador Program on Aug. 9. This funding, which, according to an article by the Denton Record-Chronicle, would be used for a "scaled back version" of the program and could take away funding from certain community programs like the Denton Community Market.

Instead of continuing the city's trend of deferring responsibility for helping people without housing by assigning another public-private partnership, Denton needs to take direct ownership in aiding people without housing.

Denton's scattered response to the increase in the city's homeless population is causing significant harm to the community. Denton leadership needs to step in and create actionable, researched and expansive initiatives to improve the city's current situation, rather than dodging accountability through public-private partnerships.

Environmental Protection Agency disregards public safety if it relinquishes responsibility for air pollution

By Alejandra Osegueda
Opinion Editor

The Environmental Protection Agency plans to rescind the endangerment finding that has served as the basis for the Clean Air Act since 2009. If overturned, the EPA would betray its inherent purpose of protecting the environment and population against climate risks, while also opening the door for corporations to leak harmful pollutants into the air unregulated.

Currently, greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide are air pollutants that the EPA's endangerment finding established as being harmful to people's welfare and therefore federally regulated under the Clean Air Act.

President Donald Trump's administration is attempting to overturn the endangerment finding by pulling at semantics and bringing into question whether the EPA has the authority to regulate greenhouse gases at all. The current legal browbeating is primarily focused on getting the EPA to roll back its greenhouse gas regulations on corporations, particularly in the transportation sector.

The Supreme Court legally allowed the EPA to place greenhouse gas regulations on corporations through the ruling of the Massachusetts v. EPA decision in 2007. The decision outlined that if the EPA can prove emissions of greenhouse gases from motor vehicles contribute to climate change and endanger people's health, then they should be regulated. According to the EPA website, the 2009 endangerment finding solidified the court's decision.

Illustrated by Victoria Maldonado

However, Trump's administration is upholding that regulating greenhouse gas emissions will be the pummeling that the current economy will just not be able to recover from. The Trump administration petitioners' July 29 opening brief pointed out how continuing to weigh the transportation sector down in emission regulations will not come without "raising unusually significant economic and political issues," according to Brownstein, a lobbying firm.

The EPA itself is rolling over to the administration's legal attack against the endangerment finding, allowing the administration to cherry-pick whichever established act protects people against climate disasters, without much of a fight.

"Alongside President Trump, we are living up to our promises to unleash American energy, lower costs for Americans, revitalize the American auto industry, and work hand-in-hand with our state partners to advance our shared mission," EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin said in an announcement reported by The New York Times.

Rescinding the endangerment finding will allow the transportation sector to throw out its greenhouse gas emission standards for all vehicles and engines with model years 2012-2027 and any emerging vehicles in the market.

The EPA's failure to protect the public from these legally and scientifically proven harmful air pollutants only serves to benefit the fossil fuel industry, which requires cars and consumers to be reliant on gas.

The environment and population will, in turn, feel the exacerbated climate change effects that the EPA is closely regulating through the Clean Air Act and, in extension, the endangerment finding. Acid rain, urban air pollution build-up and toxic air emissions are some climate disasters the public could stand to face if the endangerment finding gets overturned.

The legal attack against the endangerment finding is not the only thing Trump's administration launched against the EPA, with more than two dozen rules and policies coming under scrutiny last spring. Trump is attempting to dismantle the EPA's ability to protect the public against climate change while reaping in the fringe benefits of pleasing America's corporations in doing so.

The EPA and Trump's administrations are walking hand-in-hand away from climate pollution regulation. The EPA is essentially moving forward with reevaluating its own role in air pollution regulation and the legal basis of the endangerment finding without much resistance.

"This signal to deregulate air pollution is diametrically opposed to the obligation the EPA has to protect public health," said Conrad Schneider, senior director for the U.S. at the Clean Air Task Force, in a statement to NPR.

The majority of areas in the U.S. currently exceed national air quality standards due to a variety of pollutants, including vehicle emissions. There are also 156.1 million Americans living in places with unhealthy levels of ozone and particle pollution, according to the American Lung Association.

The EPA needs to reassess its role in allowing the current administration to override foundational air pollution findings that protect public health and the environment.

The EPA needs to stand up against climate attacks that are emerging, whether that be in the form of the current presidential administration's legal attacks or escalating climate disasters. If they do not, the EPA reduces itself to a mere political instrument at the expense of the public it serves.